

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service
Santa Fe National Forest



For Immediate Release

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May 16, 2003

FIRE RESTRICTIONS BEGINNING MAY 21, 2003

SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST & VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE

(**Santa Fe, NM**)—The Santa Fe National Forest and Valles Caldera National Preserve will move into the first level of fire restrictions beginning Wednesday, May 21st. Campfires will be limited to camp and picnic grounds where grills are provided. Smoking is permitted only in vehicles, enclosed building or in developed campgrounds.

Restrictions will go into effect prior to the Memorial Day Holiday, one of the busiest weekends, in terms of forest visitation. “We invite people to visit and enjoy the national forest, but to do so in a firesafe way,” said Gilbert Zepeda, Acting Forest Supervisor.

Exception:

Three of the four Congressionally designated Wilderness areas within the Santa Fe National Forest will be the exceptions: **Pecos, San Pedro Parks, and Chama River Canyon Wilderness** areas, as they are higher elevation, have shading, many have north-facing slopes and still have snowpack. While the use of campfires is not restricted within the “Wilderness” at this time, people are asked to be cautious with fire use. Make sure campfires are dead out before leaving your camping area.

The **Dome Wilderness** (in the Jemez Mountains) will fall under the same fire restrictions as the rest of the forest. **Campfires and smoking will not be allowed within the Dome Wilderness** area as there are more values at risk, it is lower in elevation, southern exposure (more direct sunlight) and cured grasses.

“We are reaching high to very high fire danger levels now and we’ve got to be extremely careful with fire. This year we’ve been fortunate, in that resource conditions haven’t warranted the need for fire restrictions as early as they did last year. Last year we went into fire restrictions in March followed by totally closing the Forest in early May,” said Zepeda, “**We are not closing any areas of the forest at this time.** If and when conditions dictate closure, we will phase-in closures of certain high risk areas and do all we can to minimize impacts to communities, visitors and businesses before we’d impose a complete forest closure.”

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Santa Fe N.F. Fire Restrictions

“The forest received normal to above normal amounts of precipitation over the winter, but cumulative drought conditions of the past 3-4 years have left the vegetation vulnerable. We’ve also been experiencing several hot and windy days. We are not seeing moisture recovery in the grasses, other plants and trees,” said Paul Orozco, Forest Fire Management Officer. “Fire danger will remain high until our seasonal monsoons kick in which could be sometime in late June or July. People out in the forest should be vigilant about their surroundings and any sudden changes in weather. ”

“The Valles Caldera National Preserve will follow with the same level of restrictions as the Santa Fe National Forest throughout this fire season,” said Dennis Trujillo, Preserve Manager.

❖ **Open Campfire Restrictions:**

Campfires, charcoal grills and stove fires **are prohibited** on national forest lands without a permit, except in Forest Service developed camp and picnic grounds where grills are provided. Pressurized liquid or gas stoves, lanterns and heaters meeting safety specifications are allowed.

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❖ **Smoking Restrictions:**

Smoking is allowed within an enclosed vehicle or building; a developed recreation site; or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter and free of all flammable material.

❖ **Fireworks:**

As always, fireworks are prohibited on all national forest lands.

We need everyone’s help to keep the forest free from fires for the duration of this fire season.

Additional fire information can be obtained at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/fire> . For other local fire restrictions for any public lands in the southwest, you can call **toll free 1-877-864-6985**. To report a fire, call (505) 438-7800.



ORDER



STAGE I FIRE RESTRICTIONS

**SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST
VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE**

Pursuant to 36 CFR § 261.50(a), the following acts are **prohibited** on all National Forest System lands within the Santa Fe National Forest and the Valles Caldera National Preserve, in the State of New Mexico ("the restricted area"). The restricted area is depicted on the attached map, hereby incorporated into this Order as Exhibit A.

1. Building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, campfire, charcoal broiler or stove fire, except within a developed recreation site where grills are provided. 36 CFR § 261.52(a)
2. Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site, or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable material. 35 CFR §261.52(d).
3. Possessing, discharging or using any kind of firework or other pyrotechnic device. 36 CFR §261.52(f).

Pursuant to 36 CFR § 261.50(e), the following persons are exempt from this order:

1. Any Federal, State or Local Officer or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force in the performance of an official duty.
2. Permittees that are branding livestock within a corral without risk of a wildfire.

The following areas within the Santa Fe National areas are excluded from the restrictions: The Pecos Wilderness, San Pedro Parks Wilderness, and the Chama River Canyon Wilderness.

These restrictions are being implemented for public safety and because of extreme fire hazard conditions on federal lands.

This order becomes effective at 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, May 21, 2003 and will remain in force until rescinded.

Done at Santa Fe, NM, this 16th day of May 2003.

/s/Gilbert Zepeda

GILBERT ZEPEDA, Acting Forest Supervisor
Santa Fe National Forest

/s/Dennis Trujillo

DENNIS TRUJILLO, Preserve Manager
Valles Caldera National Preserve